

As a follow-up to the “meeting facilitation” discussion at Monday’s Eco Framework meeting and subsequent conversations with and input from individual project team members, EPA is providing our perspective and direction to the project team on meeting facilitation.

Eric and I requested of DEQ that Mikell O’Mealy facilitate our recent framework meeting and continue in that role during the next couple of months while we work through the framework issues with the LWG. -Mikell is an experienced facilitator with strong team leadership skills, and her work on the project thus far has enhanced our ability to reach important outcomes for the project. We fully support Mikell’s in this role and believe that her attendance and facilitation of meetings is needed to help us move forward at this critical stage~~benefits the project as a whole.~~ -The goal, and our experience, is that having Mikell facilitate our meetings enhances the productivity of our meetings, allows us to capture key ideas and areas of agreement/disagreement, and provides a critical summary of the conclusions reached and action items to help us make progress.

There have been some concerns raised by ~~Tribal representatives~~ Environment International about Mikell’s neutrality when acting in the facilitator role. In our view, accusations that Mikell does not act in a neutral capacity are at best unfounded, and at worst are ~~and~~ attempt to undermine progress at the Portland Harbor site. The discussions that took place at Monday’s meeting and again during an eco-team meeting on Tuesday, take valuable time away from ~~our~~ the technical work that we need to do and will not be tolerated in the future.

[[The tribes recently requested that Mikell not act as facilitator in the recent meeting regarding lamprey and sturgeon data needs. Based on that specific request, EPA did not ask Mikell to facilitate that technical discussion on lamprey and sturgeon. In fairness to Mikell and in consideration of the tribe’s concern about lamprey/sturgeon issues, we will not be asking Mikell to facilitate future meetings on this specific issue until EPA makes a determination on the lamprey/sturgeon RI data needs. – I strongly suggest taking this paragraph out. I don’t think it’s needed because it relates to decisions EPA will make internally going forward, and having it here dilutes and message and could create some uncertainty about facilitation up until EPA decides on lamprey/sturgeon data needs.]]

Going forward, ~~we~~ Eric and I will continue to make decisions about which of our meetings will be facilitated, and we appreciate Mikell’s willingness to continue to serve as our facilitator.~~determine which of the upcoming meetings need to have a facilitator.~~ In general, we believe that having a facilitator is necessary to ensure that our meetings remain productive. It is our desire to reach consensus on key issues when possible, but the overall objective is to ensure participation in EPA’s decision-making process. Some meetings will need more formal facilitation to accomplish this, others may not. It should also go without saying that, regardless of our disagreements, we are all expected to work together in a respectful and professional manner. We ~~need-must~~ to ensure that our meetings are productive and we simply do not have time to deal with unnecessary distractions.

Here is the process we will be using ~~to reach consensus at in~~ future meetings ~~with~~ facilitation.

1. Mikell will develop agendas for facilitated meetings, in consultation with EPA and soliciting input from other team members as appropriate.
2. Mikell will distribute the agendas to the team prior to our meetings, along with any pre-meeting assignments to select team members or the entire group. Team members are responsible for providing Mikell with timely input to prepare us for effective, productive meetings.
3. Based on her experience as a facilitator, Mikell will determine which tools to use in meetings to enable effective, efficient discussions (tools may include flip charts to capture key agreements or areas of disagreements, breakout meetings for small group work, projecting typed notes on a screen, etc.).
4. The goal of our discussions will be to reach consensus (i.e., agreement from all participants) on key issues when possible. When key agreements are reached, Mikell will query the team to confirm the consensus position, or to document any disagreements expressed by team members.
4. Each participant is responsible for their own positions and contributions during meetings, and each team members is obligated to express their views (i.e., agreement or disagreement with the consensus position) during the meeting. ~~will be responsible for soliciting team member input, developing an agenda based on that input and distributing it to the project team prior to the meeting.~~
5. ~~During the meeting each team member has an obligation to ensure that their views are appropriately captured.~~
5. ~~The goal of our discussions will be to reach consensus on key issues when ever possible.~~
4. ~~Mikell will document, on the flip chart, the key issues, areas of consensus and disagreement, and next steps.~~
5. ~~Mikell will query the team to ensure that the consensus position or the disagreement is properly captured.~~
6. After each meeting, Mikell will develop a product that reflects what the team achieved in the meeting, including areas of team agreement and disagreement, action items and/or next steps, and any other information necessary to advance the team's work. Meeting products may take many different forms (e.g., a summary of agreements/disagreements, proposals for addressing issues, technical or policy recommendations, etc.) depending on the purpose and outcome of each meeting.
6. Mikell will provide draft meeting products to the team for review. Team members will provide comments on the products to Mikell, with a cc to other team members if new ideas or significant issues are raised. ~~After the meeting, the flip chart notes will be distributed to the project team.~~
7. The project team will be given an opportunity to comment on the notes. Individual comments on the notes should be sent to Mikell with cc to the project team.
- 7-8. Mikell will make appropriate changes to the draft meeting products per team member comments, in consultation with EPA or individual team members as needed, and

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~~Mikell or EPA will send the final meeting products back out to the team. After making the appropriate changes to the comments, the revised notes will be forwarded to the project team.~~

~~8-9.~~ In those instances where issue summaries based on the ~~notes-meeting products~~ will be transmitted to the LWG to facilitate our meetings with the LWG, EPA will be responsible for finalizing the summaries and transmitting them to the LWG.

~~9-10. In cases where a~~ Where there is a need for a more fully developed response or technical position is needed as a result of our meetings, EPA will consider options for assigning these tasks to a subgroup of the team or to individual team members. ~~EPA will consider the options. For example, EPA may determine that it is appropriate to assign tasks (ie, drafting the summary) to a subgroup or an individual team member.~~ As always, this work will be coordinated with the entire project team.

Finally, we want to make it perfectly clear that it is EPA's desire to reach consensus whenever possible. EPA desires open and objective discussion about technical issues and believes we must capture the areas of agreement and disagreement. However, given the technical complexities of the site and the uncertainties surrounding the science, EPA recognizes that we will not always be able to reach technical agreement either internally or with the Lower Willamette Group. As a result, when consensus cannot be reached, EPA will consider the technical arguments, decide on the appropriate approach, advise the project team, and provide direction to the Lower Willamette Group. Team members who disagree with EPA's position may make use of the dispute resolution elements of the Memorandum of Understanding.

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